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ABSTRACT

This report describes an instructional unit on government documents for college freshmen, implemented at the university library at Southest Missouri State University. Government documents in the federal depository library were the focus for the unit. In the introductory session to library use, the students often received only a cursory acknowledgment of the wealth of information available in public documents. This unit details how the resources were gathered, how news broadcasts reinforced the use of the documents, and how students then proceeded to conduct their own research using the materials. Appendices include sources of information and copies of handouts distributed to students during the course of the lesson. (EH)

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ED 382 507

Educating for Civic Awareness:

The Use of Government Resources in Tracking Current Affairs

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and
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Educating for Civic Awareness:
The Use of Government Resources in Tracking Current Affairs

Southeast Missouri State University serves an economically and educationally disadvantaged region which is geographically remote from the state's cultural, economic, and educational centers. The student body includes a high percentage of first generation college students, many of whom are over age twenty-five and carrying both employment and family responsibilities in addition to their role as students. The university library has the good fortune to be designated as a selective federal depository library, and so is able to provide access to a wide range of materials which would otherwise be difficult for students to obtain.

The required freshman introductory course, "Creative and Critical Thinking," includes a fifty minute session on using the library, but the abbreviated time frame makes it impossible to do more than introduce the library catalog and the most basic periodicals access points. Government documents, of necessity, get little or no mention. Since the documents are separated out from other materials, including the use of a separate classification system, students tend to be intimidated and to avoid the documents. In order to help students discover the wealth of material available in the documents collection, and to help them learn how to use the collection, an instructional session was developed which builds on the skills and experiences of the older students, many of whom have participated in the political process on a local level, and have had need to locate reliable information in order to validate a

position or substantiate a claim.

As the instructional session was developed, four learning objectives were articulated. These four are all closely interrelated, and build on each other. The first objective was to teach students to watch and listen for clues from media sources which would lead back to authoritative sources of information. Second was to teach students how to differentiate between primary and secondary sources, and why that is important. Similarly, the third objective was to teach students to assess and question the validity of their sources, and to use secondary sources to supplement their understanding of the primary source. The idiosyncracies of the Congressional Record made this source ideal for conveying this particular idea. Finally, the fourth objective was to teach students how to keep themselves informed about proposed legislation and regulations, and how to participate in the legislative and rule-making processes.

As so often happens, serendipity came into play as the instructional session was being developed. The news media began speculating that President Clinton would use the twentieth anniversary of the Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade decision to rescind some of the abortion restrictions issued by the previous administration. Given that forewarning, it was possible to videotape various network news broadcasts of the president signing a series of executive orders to that effect. Care was taken to get a range of coverage which included opposing viewpoints from both the pro-choice and the pro-life positions.

The video proved to be ideal for teaching students to pay attention to clues that would lead them to the appropriate primary sources. Knowing that the broadcasts were done on the twentieth anniversary of Roe v. Wade provided an easily identified date, as well as a reference to a specific Supreme Court decision about which much has been written. The students were also told to listen for clues like "executive order," "regulation," "supreme court," "congress," "floor debate," and "law" to help them identify just what the broadcast was showing them. To prepare the students to identify these clues, the librarians began the session with a discussion, accompanied by handouts, on how a bill becomes law; the parallel codification of legislative and regulatory law; participating in the rule making process through the Federal Register system; and the definition of primary and secondary sources. The video was then shown, followed by a discussion session during which the students were asked to identify some of the clues they had picked up from the broadcasts, and to suggest how they might follow up on those clues to get more complete information. Also included in the handouts were bibliographies of useful general resources which would aid in the understanding of federal, state and local government. The bibliographies included information likely to be readily available in non-depository libraries.

In preparation for the session, a number of sources had been collected and taken to the classroom. Among these were secondary sources such as newspaper, magazine, and journal articles, handbooks, and guides. Primary sources such as the Federal

Register, Congressional Record, and the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Papers were also included. Following the discussion of the videotape, the class was divided into three groups. The first group was assigned to locate materials dealing with abortion in the Federal Register. The second group was asked to do the same thing using the Congressional Record, while the third group was instructed to find at least one primary and one secondary source treating that topic. The groups were given about ten minutes to work on this while the librarians and the course instructor circulated among the groups to provide assistance and answer questions. Each group was then asked to select a spokesperson and report back to the class on what had been found, how, and what had been learned in the process.

At the start of the session, the students were noticeably leery of the whole thing. After viewing and discussing the videotape, they recognized that they probably knew more than they had been giving themselves credit for, but were still hesitant to tackle some of the more intimidating-looking document sources. By the end of the session, when each group shared its newly won knowledge with the rest of the class, it was evident that the students were enjoying a sense of accomplishment and confidence. They had tackled some challenging materials and had succeeded.

Several factors contributed to the success of this session. First was the good fortune of being able to use a "real" current event. The videotaped broadcasts provided a wonderful venue for showing the students how much they already knew while teaching them

how to build upon that knowledge by paying attention and being aware of potential clues they might follow up on. Second, the students welcomed the opportunity to work together rather than tackle some of these sources on their own. The resultant discussions helped them clarify, for each other, issues they might not have been willing to bring up in front of the whole class. Another very major factor was that the relevant documents and indexes had all been identified and collected ahead of time, so the students were guaranteed a successful experience if they made any effort at all. Third, they enjoyed the opportunity to share with the rest of the class what they had learned in their groups. It validated their success to be able to explain how and where they had found their answers.

The session format provided a natural rhythm that served to hold the students' attention. The initial ten to fifteen minutes was devoted to a lecture supplemented by handouts. This was followed questions and clarification, after which the video was shown. At the conclusion of the video came a period of discussion and group activity, followed by the opportunity for students to synthesize what they learned into a meaningful framework. Each segment was completed before boredom or fatigue set in.

APPENDICES

(Materials Used)

Sources of Information

Congressional Record
(Outside of Docs Area, north side)

Mandated to be a verbatim account of congressional proceedings; however, any member may change, omit, or add remarks by editing his or her transcript. Undelivered speeches are identified by bullet marks, a reform enacted in 1978 in an attempt to overcome the obvious problem of determining what *really* was said on the floor. The Daily Digest section provides a concise, factual record of committee and floor proceedings, vote totals, hearings, meetings, status of bills, and the program for the coming week.

Federal Register
(Outside of Docs Area, west side)

Established in 1933 as a result of the Federal Register Act, which stipulates that government regulations have no legal force until they are made public. *Federal Register* is a daily publication of presidential proclamations, executive orders, agency regulations, notices, and Sunshine Act meetings. The deadline for written comments from the public is sixty days.

Weekly Compilation of Presidential Papers
(AE2.109:)

Presidential statements, speeches, and other releases by the White House, compiled and published weekly by the Office of the Federal Register.

Code of Federal Regulations
(AE2.106/3:)

Regulations published in the *Federal Register* are codified yearly into the the *Code of Federal Regulations*, which is the cumulative body of regulations having legal force.

Monthly Catalog of United States Government Publications
(Docs Ref)

An index developed and maintained by the United States Government Printing Office in an attempt to list all publications originating from any federal agency or office. The CD ROM version, *GPO on SilverPlatter*, covers the period from July 1976 to date, while the paper format goes back to 1900.

Congressional Information Service Annual
(Docs Ref)

Provides monthly and annually cumulated indexing for publications issued by Congress, including abstracts and legislative histories.

USEFUL GENERAL REFERENCE SOURCES

FEDERAL INFORMATION SOURCES

Congress and the Nation. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1993.

Congressional Quarterly's Guide to Congress. 4th ed. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1991.

Congressional Quarterly's Guide to the Presidency. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1989.

Official Congressional Directory. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, annual.

Morehead, Joe and Fetzer, Mary. *Introduction to United States Government Information Sources* . 4th ed. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1992.

Nakata, Yuri, *From Press to People: Collecting and Using U.S. Government Publications.* Chicago: American Library Association, 1979.

Robinson, Judith Schiek. *Tapping the Government Grapevine: The User-Friendly Guide to U.S. Government Information Sources.* 2nd ed. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 1993.

STATE AND LOCAL SOURCES

Official Manual, State of Missouri. Jefferson City: Secretary of State, biennial.

Revised Statutes of the State of Missouri, 1986. Jefferson City, MO: The Committee on Legislative Research, 1986.

1992 Cumulative Supplement to the Revised Statutes of the State of Missouri, 1986. Jefferson City, MO: The Committee on Legislative Research, 1992.

Laws of Missouri. Jefferson City: Secretary of State, annual.

Code of State Regulations: Annotated. Jefferson City: Secretary of State, looseleaf.

Code of Ordinances: City of Cape Girardeau, Missouri. Tallahassee, FL: Municipal Code Corp., looseleaf.

OUTLINE

I. **Discussion of "How A Bill Becomes Law" and "Parallel Codification of Legislation."**

This discussion explains the process by which proposed legislation is enacted into law, and the various formats in which it may be found.

II. **Discussion of Congressional Record, Federal Register, Weekly Compilation of Presidential Papers and other sources.**

In this segment, the concept of primary and secondary sources is discussed, as well as the difference between journal and magazine literature.

III. **Video on the Abortion Issue**

The video includes various news reports on the abortion issue as reported in January of 1993. It shows President Clinton signing the Executive Orders, and opposing viewpoints from pro-choice and pro-life activists. The objective of this segment is to teach students how to watch for clues that would lead them to the appropriate primary source, i.e. President Clinton signing the Executive Orders, the mention of the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court case, the mention of RU 486, and the "Gag Rule" legislation passed during President Reagan's term.

IV. **The Assignment**

For an average class of 25-30 students, people will be divided into three groups. Group one will find information on abortion in the *Federal Register*. Group two will find information in *Congressional Record*. Group three will find one item from a primary source and one from a secondary source. A spokesperson from each group will explain to the class what they found, how they found it and what they learned.

V. **Learning Objectives**

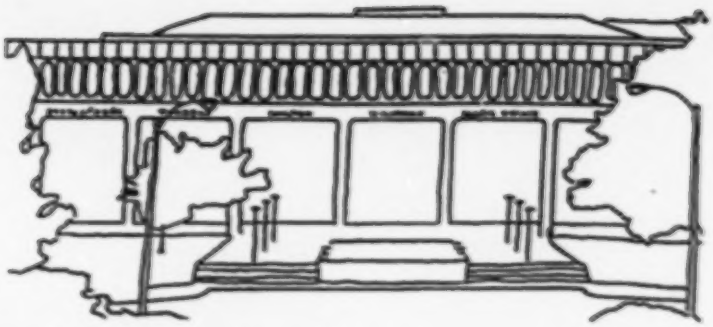
1. To listen and look for clues from media sources that will lead to an authoritative source of information.

2. To distinguish between a primary and secondary source

3. To assess/question the validity of sources and use secondary source information to supplement understanding. (The idiosyncracies of *Congressional Record* help in getting this concept across).

4. To inform oneself about proposed legislation and learn how to participate in the legislative process.

WHAT IS A PRIMARY SOURCE?



There are three types of sources used in historical research.

I. Primary Sources

A primary source is a document or other sort of evidence written or created during the time under study. Primary sources offer an inside view of a particular event. Some types are:

Original Documents (excerpts or translations acceptable)
Diaries, speeches, letters, minutes, interviews, news film footage, autobiographies, official records

Creative Works
Poetry, drama, novels, music, art

Relics or Artifacts
Jewelry, pottery, furniture, clothing or buildings

Examples of primary sources:
Diary of Anne Frank - experiences of Jews in World War II
The Declaration of Independence - U.S. History
Bible - Hebrew customs in biblical times
Arrowheads and pottery - American Indian history
Plato's Republic - Women in ancient Greece

II. Secondary Sources

A secondary source interprets primary sources. Secondary sources are one step removed from the event. Examples: A book about the effects of World War II, or a journal article which interprets a scholar's contribution in a field. Some types are: textbooks, journal articles, histories, criticism, commentaries, and encyclopedias.

III. Intermediate or Finding Sources

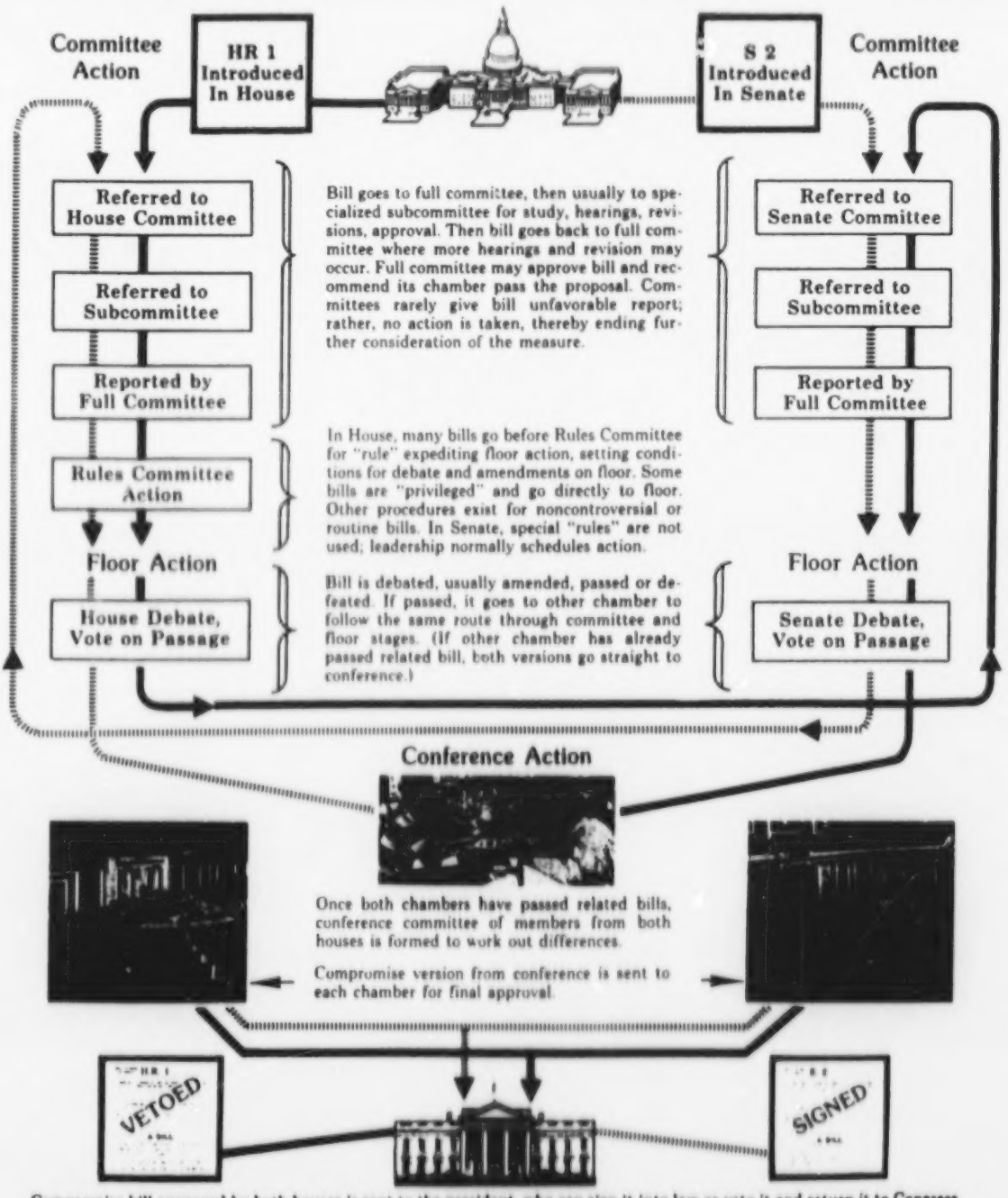
Access tools lead to primary or secondary sources. For example, SADIE, the online catalog, will find works by Aristotle (primary source) or works about him (secondary source). Some types are: periodical indexes, bibliographies, and online catalogs*.

Find primary sources with the following SADIE searches:
k=[subject] and (sources or documents).su.
k=[subject] and (source? or document?) (catches some additional primary sources and a few irrelevant titles)
for example: k=great britain and (sources or documents).su.

In addition to sources or documents, try: correspondence, eyewitness, trials, diaries, personal narratives

FIGURE 8.1: How a Bill Becomes Law.

This graphic shows the most typical way in which proposed legislation is enacted into law. There are more complicated, as well as simpler, routes, and most bills never become law. The process is illustrated with two hypothetical bills, House bill No. 1 (HR 1) and Senate bill No. 2 (S 2). Bills must be passed by both houses in identical form before they can be sent to the president. The path of HR 1 is traced by a solid line, that of S 2 by a broken line. In practice most bills begins as similar proposals in both houses.


Committee Action
HR 1 Introduced In House
S 2 Introduced In Senate
Committee Action
Referred to House Committee
Referred to Subcommittee
Reported by Full Committee
Bill goes to full committee, then usually to specialized subcommittee for study, hearings, revisions, approval. Then bill goes back to full committee where more hearings and revision may occur. Full committee may approve bill and recommend its chamber pass the proposal. Committees rarely give bill unfavorable report; rather, no action is taken, thereby ending further consideration of the measure.
Referred to Senate Committee
Referred to Subcommittee
Reported by Full Committee
Rules Committee Action
In House, many bills go before Rules Committee for "rule" expediting floor action, setting conditions for debate and amendments on floor. Some bills are "privileged" and go directly to floor. Other procedures exist for noncontroversial or routine bills. In Senate, special "rules" are not used; leadership normally schedules action.
Floor Action
House Debate, Vote on Passage
Bill is debated, usually amended, passed or defeated. If passed, it goes to other chamber to follow the same route through committee and floor stages. (If other chamber has already passed related bill, both versions go straight to conference.)
Floor Action
Senate Debate, Vote on Passage
Conference Action
Once both chambers have passed related bills, conference committee of members from both houses is formed to work out differences.
Compromise version from conference is sent to each chamber for final approval.
VETOED
SIGNED

Compromise bill approved by both houses is sent to the president, who can sign it into law or veto it and return it to Congress. Congress may override veto by a two-thirds majority vote in both houses; bill then becomes law without president's signature.

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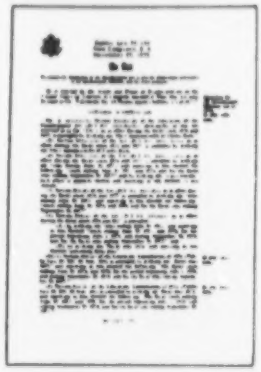
FIGURE 9.2: STAT/USC Compared with FR/CFR.

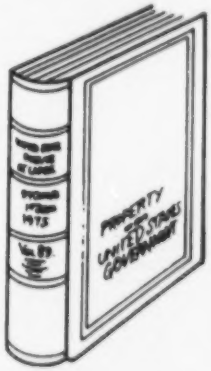
Parallel Codification of Legislation and Regulation

LEGISLATION
is published first as



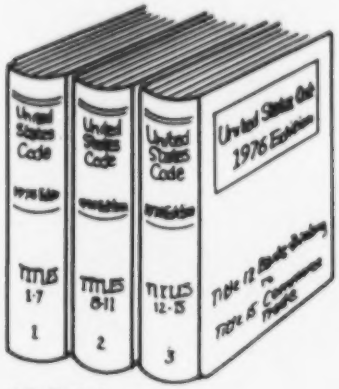
Slip Law
(Public Law 94-142)

is compiled annually in the



U.S. Statutes at Large
(89 Stat. 773)

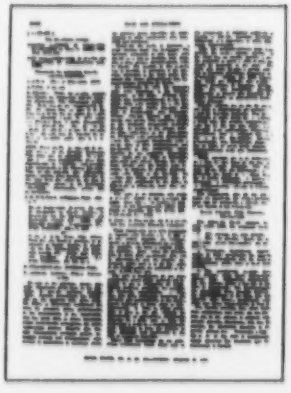
is codified in the



U.S. Code *
(20 U.S.C. 1401 et seq.)

Legislation Is Implemented by Federal Agencies as Rules and Regulations

REGULATIONS
appear as
agency documents

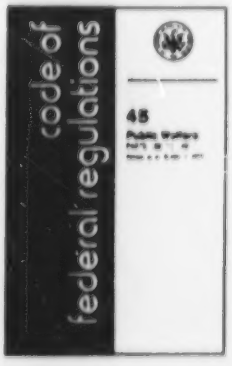


FR Doc. 77-36597

which are published
daily in the

Federal Register
(42 FR 65082)

and codified annually in the



Code of Federal Regulations
(45 CFR 121a)

* Published by West Publishing Company under the direction of the Office of the Law Revision Counsel of the House of Representatives.

Source: *The Federal Register: What It Is and How to Use It,* 1978 ed.

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OUR NATION NEEDS YOUR IDEAS

PARTICIPATING IN THE RULEMAKING PROCESS

1. Type your comment neatly.

2. Include your name and address.

3. Follow any agency directions for labeling comments with CFR part or section numbers.

4. If you agree or disagree, explain why.

5. Describe the ways in which the regulation affects you, and offer alternatives or compromises.

6. Watch for announcements of public meetings or hearings. Read the *Unified Agenda of Federal Regulations*, published semiannually. This tells you what regulations are being considered.

7. Pay attention to newspaper, magazine and television coverage. Do they give a clue as to whether this is a discussion, or a proposed regulation? Is there a debate going on among legislators? What are the pros and cons? How does it affect you?